

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Costa Rica

Post: San Jose

Americas Food and Beverage Show Report

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CSSF Activity Report

Approved By:

Kelly Stange, Agricultural Attaché

Prepared By:

Illeana Ramírez, Ag. Marketing Specialist

Report Highlights:

From October 26-27, 2010, Illeana Ramírez, the Agricultural Marketing Specialist from OAA San Jose, escorted a delegation of 55 Costa Rican participants to the 14th Annual Americas Food and Beverage Show, held at the Miami Beach Convention Center.

General Information:

OVERVIEW

From October 26-27, 2010, Illeana Ramírez, the Agricultural Marketing Specialist from OAA San Jose, escorted a delegation of 55 Costa Rican participants to the 14th Annual Americas Food and Beverage Show, held at the Miami Beach Convention Center. The show was a great opportunity for both U.S. exhibitors and the Costa Rican food retail and food service sectors to meet, make contacts, and learn about new products to import.

The USMEF, USAPEEC and the USDEC joined efforts to carry out a dinner at a Cuban Restaurant to host Latin American importers of meat, dairy and poultry products. That activity gave the Marketing Specialist the opportunity to meet with contacts from the United States as well as those from other countries.

The Costa Rican delegation consisted of importers and exporters ranging from general managers to marketing and purchasing managers to chefs.

As done in the past, the Miami World Trade Center and NASDA offered two nights lodging and the base fare of the plane ticket to some of our key contacts. Also as part of that program, show organizers arranged one-on-one meetings for Costa Rican VIP invitees with some of the exhibitors interested in exporting to Costa Rica. These meetings were of great benefit to the VIPs since they had time beforehand to prepare, view some of the products in advance and obtain complete information on samples, sizing, prices, and shipping duties.

Thanks to the new opportunities created by CAFTA, attending these food shows allows Costa Rican importers to develop new business contacts, diversify their offerings and maximize their client portfolio by building new product lines.

The show organizers and FAS held a closing meeting on Tuesday, November 27th for all the FAS Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) leading delegations from each attending country (Venezuela, Nicaragua, Brazil, Costa Rica and the Caribbean). During this meeting FSNs provided feedback about the show setting, number of exhibitors, logistics, type of products, one-on-one meetings, etc. The general opinion is that in 2010, the show was much better than the previous year. It is not a huge show, but there are a range of good products for the Costa Rican market. Some of the participants mentioned that they made excellent contacts, found what they needed and are starting negotiations with some of the exhibitors.

Although there is not yet complete information regarding on-site purchasing, we received some information on beginning negotiations between Costa Rican importers and U.S. exporters. For example, to diversify their product line, a Costa Rican general gourmet food importer is negotiating with a processed meat company for breakfast sausages, bacon and ham. Others are in the process of analyzing new products and offers.

There is an annual competition for chefs at this show and participation by Costa Rican chefs would be an attractive incentive for Costa Rican hotels and restaurants and for their chefs to earn recognition and learn about U.S. products. Post could seek participants through the Costa Rican Chef's Association. Organizers expressed concerns about purchasing ingredients and tools and suggested that it would be much better that the organizers buy the base ingredients and charge a fee to the participants. Organizers need to have all the necessary equipment on-site because it is difficult for participants to travel with their cooking supplies.

Organizers also have the idea to proceed with planning a "bakery competition" for next year.

Organizers are looking forward to visiting some of the Latin American countries to more efficiently promote this

event. Post is willing to support that visit.

GENERAL COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE SHOW:

This year, in terms of organization and communication with posts, the Miami Convention Center and organizers of the show were very efficient except when pre-registrants tried to pick up their badges. There were not enough personnel to manage the registration tables and the lines were slow. The objective of pre-registration is to have the badge ready and to speed the entry process while not making participants to wait in line. At the same time, participants expressed satisfaction with the on-line registration process, and felt that the show went well.

Canada participated with a national pavilion, as well as Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Jamaica.

One highly positive and promising development from the show was the willingness of American exporters to work with the needs of Costa Rican importers. While many Costa Rican importers are interested in ordering a variety of products from various American companies, they have a unique issue when it comes to ordering and shipping.

Because of the size of Costa Rica and the smaller size of its market, many Costa Rican importers are interested in importing the right amount of product to fit their needs. For example, importers may not want several large containers of an item immediately, especially if they are bringing a new product to Costa Rica. They prefer smaller amounts so they can not only market test and position the new product within Costa Rica, but also measure sales of the product before placing larger orders. Not only do Costa Rican importers prefer to customize the amounts of product they order, but for smaller orders, they prefer to have these orders sent to a hub in Miami to be consolidated and shipped to Costa Rica in as few containers as possible. This helps maximize their efficiency and reduce costs.

Therefore, given these particular needs, many Costa Rican importers were pleased to meet a number of medium-size American companies exhibiting at the Food and Beverage show who are willing to work with their requests regarding product ordering.

Some coming imports are based on negotiations with Jones Farms, Lean Cuisine, Sysco and other cheese companies. U.S. exporters are looking into obtaining Free Sale Certificates and food prices. Once shipping is done, post will have a better picture from Costa Rica importers and will provide a report on sale volumes for this show to FAS Washington.

CONCLUSION

The U.S. Pavilion was very successful as demonstrated by higher number of exhibitors: 108 in 2010 compared with 93 last year. The variety of products on display was greatly expanded as well. There was steady traffic for two days which was indicative of the high interest of visitors in the pavilion's product offerings. For the FAS San José FSN attending this show, it was a great opportunity to touch base with cooperators, state groups and meet new U.S. food and beverage suppliers.

Next year's show is planned for November 14-15, 2011 at the Miami Beach Convention Center.

COST

Total expenses for the San José FSN to attend this event - \$1,531.50

